



TO: Democratic Colleagues
FROM: DCCC Chairman Chris Van Hollen
RE: Political Update
DATE: November 18, 2010

There is no sugar coating the election results. As President Obama said, we took a shellacking in federal, state, and local races across the country. It is painful to see so many of our outstanding and courageous colleagues swept away in the political wave that hit the country on Election Day.

We do take some solace in the fact that Members and independent political analysts have uniformly said that the DCCC did everything it could to prepare for and wage tough campaigns. Indeed, while it may be small consolation given the magnitude of the losses, a review of the results finds that were it not for the efforts of our candidates and the DCCC, it could have been even worse.

The Political Environment

Three major factors converged to create a political hurricane; a difficult playing field; 9.6 percent unemployment; and secret spending from outside front groups.

1. **Difficult Playing Field.** As the DCCC observed at the January 2009 Caucus Retreat, Congressional Democrats began the cycle on a very challenging political playing field. Due to Democrats' success picking up 55 seats in the previous two elections, we had lots of Members representing Republican leaning districts. Following the successful 2006 and 2008 cycles, House Democrats represented 84 districts President George W. Bush won in 2004. By contrast only seven Republicans represented districts that Senator John Kerry won in 2004. The 2004 election was the last non-wave election and a good barometer of how many districts perform in a neutral political environment (Republicans won a net of eight seats in 2004, five of which were as a result of Texas redistricting). Additionally, we faced the historic trends of midterm elections. Since Abraham Lincoln's Presidency, 22 of 24 newly-elected Presidents saw their party lose seats in Congress in the following midterm election.
2. **Rough Economy.** Twenty-nine (29) percent of voters were either out of work or knew someone out of work [ABC News]. The voters sent a clear message: they are frustrated and impatient with the 9.6% unemployment rate and the slow pace of the economic recovery. This sentiment was especially strong among independent swing voters. These voters, who supported Democratic candidates in 2006 and 2008, swung to Republicans in 2010. These voters were less interested in how we got into an economic mess or specific plans for putting people back to work. Rather, it was a referendum on the "here and now" aimed at the party in charge of the White House and the Congress.

3. Republican Outside Groups. *“We’ve had cavalry showing up on hilltops that have never shown up before to help us,” said Representative Greg Walden of Oregon, a vice chairman of the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee. – New York Times, November 3, 2010*

The onslaught of secretive Republican special interest money turned a major political storm into a category 3 political hurricane. Republican special interest groups spent an unprecedented \$74 million in mostly secret money in 64 districts. In many districts, Republican outside groups made up for Republican candidates’ failure to raise the money they needed to compete and essentially ran the Republican candidates’ campaign. There is no doubt that this increased the challenges our Members faced. For example Bruce Braley, Chris Carney, Ron Kind, and Tim Walz began October with a significant resource advantage, then the outside groups came in big, and they struggled to keep up with them.

Strong Campaigns Helped Win on the Margins

Starting in January 2009, the DCCC Frontline Program began preparing Members to compete on what we knew would be a challenging playing field. As discussed below, our Members and candidates were prepared, as was the DCCC. Unfortunately, in scores of districts the wave was too large and it overcame the benefits of preparation. However, it would be risky and wrong to conclude that strong campaigns don’t matter. At the margins, strong campaigns determine the outcome. Twelve of our Members won by less than 3 percent, and six races are still undecided. Moreover, by reallocating resources in the final weeks of the campaign, the DCCC was able to save between 15-20 seats.

With your support, the DCCC provided Members in competitive districts (Frontline Members and non-Frontline Members who faced a campaign challenge) with aggressive fundraising, political, field, research, and online organizing support. The DCCC adapted quickly to the expanding playing field, and increased its capacity to support Members in tough races by providing support in the following areas:

Fundraising. The DCCC helped Frontline Members and non-Frontline Members facing serious challenges meet aggressive fundraising goals in order to compete with the onslaught of secretive Republican outside group spending. The DCCC helped these Members raise more than \$15 million to buy TV time at half the rate as outside groups.

Political. As in previous cycles, Frontline Members had to meet aggressive goals to prepare them for the challenges of this cycle. As the playing field expanded, the DCCC met with non-Frontline Members in competitive districts and provided them with the tools to put together a strong modern campaign. The DCCC added two additional regional political directors and offered threatened non-Frontline Members the same level of attention and support that we provide our Red to Blue candidates and Frontline Members.

Research. The DCCC research department did an opposition research book on 92 Republican candidates to assist Members in defining and, in some cases, disqualifying their opponents. These research books were the foundation for narratives many successful Members used to frame the choice in their elections.

Field and Coordinated Voter Contact Programs. The DCCC invested nearly \$5 million in coordinated (441) spending to help candidates stay competitive on TV and shore up races in the expanded playing field. The DCCC invested \$14 million dollars in an unprecedented 69 direct voter contact programs aimed at persuading voters with one-on-one contact while building the largest ground operation in DCCC history. In the final weeks of the campaign, we were able to rapidly plus-up an additional 20 GOTV programs.

More than 725 field staff focused on building volunteer capacity, which allowed for an unprecedented level of voter contact. From early March through Election Day, Democrats' made more than 13 million person-to-person phone calls, and 4.8 million person-to-person door knocks. (This does not include the similar GOTV efforts being made by labor and OFA.)

The field program was the difference in many of our closer races, including: Boswell (IA-03), Critz (PA-12), Donnelly (IN-02), Heinrich (NM-01), Himes (CT-04), Kissell (NC-11), Owens (NY-23), S. Bishop (GA-02), Schrader (OR-05), and Connolly (VA-11).

Managing DCCC Resources Wisely

The DCCC spent \$82 million in support of 107 Democratic Members and candidates –\$63 million on independent expenditures, \$14 million on voter contact programs, and \$5 million on coordinated expenditures – including:

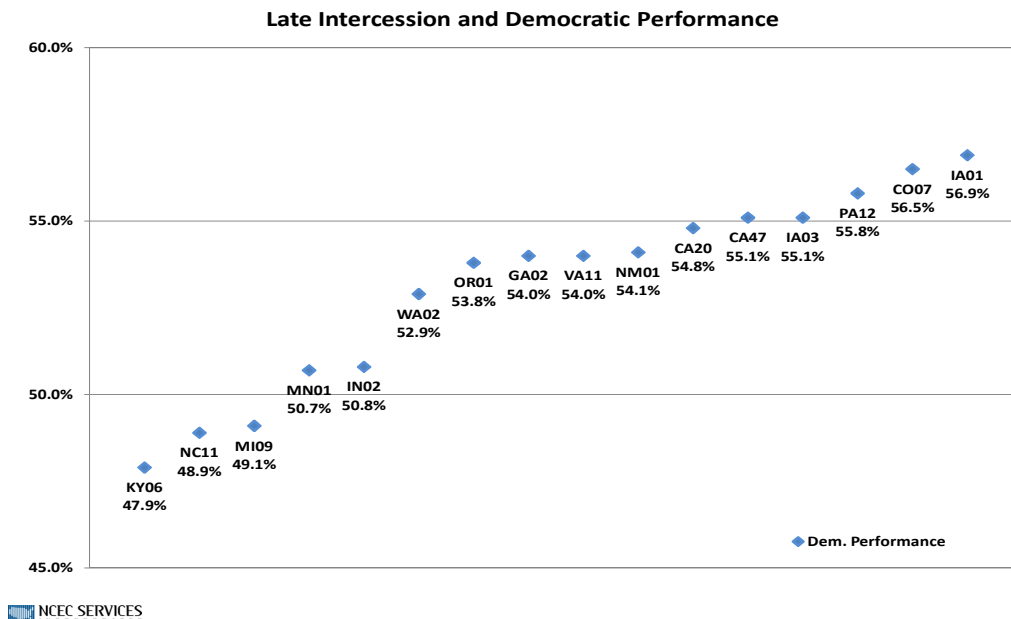
AZ-07	Grijalva	ME-01	Pingree
AZ-08	Giffords	MI-09	Peters
CA-11	McNerney	MN-01	Walz
CA-20	Costa	MO-03	Carnahan
CO-07	Perlmutter	NC-07	McIntyre
CT-04	Himes	NC-08	Kissell
CT-05	Murphy	NC-11	Shuler
DE-AL	OPEN-Castle/J. Carney	NJ-12	Holt
GA-02	Bishop	NM-01	Heinrich
HI-01	Djou	NY-22	Hinchey
IA-01	Brale	NY-23	Owens
IA-02	Loebsack	OR-01	Wu
IA-03	Boswell	OR-05	Schrader
IN-02	Donnelly	PA-12	Critz
KY-06	Chandler	VA-11	Connolly
LA-02	Cao/C. Richmond	WA-02	Larsen
MA-05	Tsongas	WI-03	Kind
MA-10	OPEN-Delahunt/B. Keating		

The DCCC also recognized that it would have to manage its resources to respond to late-breaking races in an expanding playing field. To provide flexibility, the DCCC made some very wrenching and tough decisions regarding resource allocation. While painful, these decisions ensured we had finances available to defend many Members from the onslaught of outside spending in the final weeks of the election. As stated by independent political analyst Charlie Cook, the DCCC “worked around the clock to save other members who simply would not have escaped otherwise.”

These decisions allowed us to support 26 Members with more than \$10 million on coordinated spending, field, and independent expenditure ads in races that were targeted by outside groups late in the cycle, including:

AZ-07	Grijalva	MO-03	Carnahan
AZ-08	Giffords	NC-07	McIntyre
CA-20	Costa	NC-11	Shuler
CO-07	Perlmutter	NM-01	Heinrich
CT-05	Chris Murphy	NY-01	Bishop
IA-01	Braley	NY-22	Hinchey
IA-02	Loebsack	NY-23	Owens
IN-02	Donnelly	OR-01	Wu
KY-06	Chandler	OR-05	Schrader
MA-05	Tsongas	PA-12	Critz
ME-01	Pingree	VA-11	Connolly
MI-09	Peters	WA-02	Larsen
MN-01	Walz	WI-03	Kind

As indicated by a National Committee for an Effective Congress (NCEC) analysis and the enclosed chart, the DCCC’s efforts prevented the loss of an additional 15-20 seats.



Thank You

It has been an honor to serve as the DCCC Chairman for the past four years. Thank you to the Caucus for your support and encouragement. A special thank you to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Leader Steny Hoyer and Whip James Clyburn for their tireless work on behalf of the DCCC and our Caucus.

Thank you to the 2010 team: Vice Chairs Bruce Braley, Joe Crowley, Albio Sires, and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (also Co-Chair of Frontline); Recruitment Chair Steve Israel; Frontline Co-Chair Chris Murphy; Red to Blue Co-Chairs Patrick Murphy, Donna Edwards and Allyson Schwartz (also Co-Chair of Women Lead); Women Lead Co-Chair Gwen Moore; Business Council Co-Chairs Dennis Cardoza and Ron Klein; Honorary Labor Chair George Miller; and Labor Council Co-Chairs Phil Hare and Betty Sutton.

Thank you to a truly terrific DCCC staff, led by Executive Director Jon Vogel. I would head into political battle with these DCCC staffers any election cycle. Here is what independent analyst Charlie Cook has to say about our DCCC team, “The 2010 DCCC may be one of the most talented and disciplined House committees ever assembled, despite what the final tally in the House might indicate. In this kind of political environment, the expansive playing field of races is way beyond either party's control.” ... “Their diligence and discipline prevented even worse Democratic losses.” [Cook Political Report, 10/28/10; National Journal, 11/12/10]

Looking Ahead

Republicans are already making the mistake of thinking that the election was about them, rather than a referendum on the economy. Unlike 1994, when a majority of Americans viewed Republicans favorably, voters do not have confidence in Republicans. According to exit polls on election night, 53 percent of voters view Republicans unfavorably, only 41 percent view Republicans favorably.

A large majority of the Republican freshman are undefined to voters. Relying on outside groups, these freshmen did not run positive campaigns about themselves. As voters get to know the Republican freshmen, they will not like much of what they see:

- 58 GOP freshmen pledged to defend tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas
- 34 GOP freshmen want to privatize Social Security
- 31 GOP freshmen do not believe in climate change
- 27 GOP freshmen support the a 23 percent national sales tax
- 15 GOP freshmen want to abolish the Department of Education

Sixty-one (61) Republican Members were elected with 55 percent or less of the vote, and 54 of these are freshman. Next cycle, Republican Members will be holding at least 61 seats that President Obama carried, 14 of which were also carried by Senator Kerry. (NOTE: there are still six undecided races in districts that President Obama carried).

We have an opportunity to make the Republican Majority the shortest in history.